

**Vermont Agency of Natural Resources
Fish & Wildlife Department**



**Interim Stewardship Plan
Missing Link Wildlife Management Area
Hadley Lot Update August 1, 2012
115 acres
Rockingham, VT**

Prepared By:

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With original consultation from:

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Interim Stewardship Plans

Interim Stewardship Plans (ISPs) are designed to guide the use and management of new Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) properties in the time period between the property acquisition and Long Range Management Plan (LRMP) adoption. Each Interim Stewardship Plan is tailored to fit the special features and legal restrictions that may occur on new ANR acquisitions. This document is meant to codify existing stewardship practices of ANR as they pertain to protecting new properties that may be currently used, but not actively managed. They describe how ANR will care for such lands until a comprehensive management plan process with public input has been completed. Maintaining existing roads, building gates, and marking boundaries are common examples of actions included in ISPs which protect the property from inappropriate uses without prescribing the future management of the property. This document is also meant to capture the history and key features of the property from the perspective of the individuals and organizations that worked to ensure the long-term protection of the property.

I. Property Background

The VT Fish & Wildlife Department (FWD) acquired the original "Eagle Nest" parcel in April 2007 with assistance from the Conservation Fund and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. This 64-acre parcel, sandwiched between I-91 and Route 5, was acquired to protect one of the first Bald Eagle nesting sites in Vermont in modern times. Before State ownership, the property had been used primarily as a forested woodlot. An informal parking area on this property, adjacent to Route 5, has been used for years to access the Connecticut River on the east side of Route 5 and now provides parking and pedestrian access to the Eagle Nest parcel, now known as Missing Link WMA. The name Missing Link WMA was approved by the ANR Lands Team in September 2007. Missing Link refers to the local name for this portion of Route 5 (between Rockingham and Springfield) that for many years was the only portion of Route 5 which had not been built. During the summer of 2007, the FWD received notice from the estate of Alice Hadley that a 51-acre parcel adjacent to the Missing Link WMA may become available for State ownership. This property is a crucial connector between conserved lands to the north and south along the Connecticut River owned by TransCanada (Figure 1). This additional parcel, known as the Hadley Lot, is adjacent to the South East corner of Missing Link WMA, has ownership on both sides of Route 5 and borders the Connecticut River for approximately 1100 feet (Figure 2). At the time of conveyance, the Hadley family subdivided a one-acre lot and home from the Hadley parcel. Acquisition of this parcel was completed in December 2010. This updated ISP incorporates that addition to the WMA.

II. Conservation Objectives

Missing Link WMA will:

- 1) Conserve and protect wildlife habitat, open space, Connecticut River riparian area, significant agricultural soils, and water quality.
- 2) Provide dispersed non-motorized outdoor recreation and education opportunities for the general public and other user groups.
- 3) Encourage and protect opportunities for eagle nesting: The tree holding the nest was blown down during the fall of 2006. The FWD subsequently constructed a “new” nest in a nearby tree with the hope that the eagle pair would return. No new sightings have been documented to date.
- 4) Protect and promote rare, threatened, or endangered species and natural communities: An ecological assessment is scheduled for FY 2013 to document any rare, threatened, or endangered occurrences and provide guidance regarding protection and management.

III. Future Long Range Management Plan

When a LRMP is developed for the property, it will consist of at least the following components:

- A. *General Information*: pertinent maps, general description of property, overall purpose for protecting the parcel.
- B. *Existing Conditions*: field inventories including vegetation types and natural community classification, soils, forest productivity classification, wildlife, recreation, cultural, archaeological, and historic resources, special constraints (natural areas; rare, threatened and endangered species sites; deed; easement or other legal restrictions) and emphasis zones, pertinent maps.
- C. *Conservation Objective (Desired Condition)*: resource and habitat goals and objectives referenced to the Land Use Classification system for ANR lands.
- D. *Implementation*: a description of how the parcel will be managed, taking into consideration all existing conditions (roads, trail, inholdings) to achieve the conservation objective; it includes active management strategies such as recreational or wildlife enhancements, timber harvesting, and access development.

IV. Resource Summary

Forest Composition, Condition, and Access:

The parcel has a history of tree harvesting and agriculture. Upper slopes have been forest for many years. Flat ground along the river hosts younger forests due to its more recent agricultural use. Primary tree species are white pine, red oak, red maple, and Eastern hemlock. Seedlings and saplings are variable in density. The dominant species are black birch, hemlock, red oak, white pine, and American beech. Invasive plants are common on the Hadley parcel along the river and less common on the upper elevations. The terrain ranges from flat to excessively steep. The road network west of Route 5 is in place and, though highly erodible, is stabilized. East of Route 5 the historical access was relinquished and a new access will be needed. Forest inventory was completed and a stand map generated in 2011 (Table 1, Figure 3).

Habitat:

Mixed densities, hemlock cover, oak mast, and access to the Connecticut River and associated coves create an ideal mix of habitat for a diversity of species. Several large pines, well above the main canopy, continue to be excellent sites for bald eagle nesting in the future.

Management History:

The Hadley parcel has seen little forest management in the last 50 years. A combination of development clearing and selection on the original parcel resulted in a two-aged forest of mixed timber quality with areas of dense seedlings and saplings. Post-harvest improvement work was completed by the State to further release oak and pine regeneration and to thin stands of young white pine in 2009.

Legal Restrictions on the Missing Link WMA:

Original "Eagle Nest" Parcel:

- Conservation and Public Access Easement held by Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (signed and recorded in the Town records in Rockingham.) This applies to the original 64-acre parcel.
- New England Telephone and Telegraph Company utility easement from 1910.
- New England Power Construction Company flowage rights from 1928.

Hadley Lot Parcel:

- A one-acre private subdivision, split off the original Hadley parcel, was granted a septic easement on the parcel which constitutes a deed restriction on the Hadley Lot parcel. This subdivision was in keeping with the wishes of Alice Hadley and her estate.

- Water rights with conduit to a spring on the property were conveyed to the “Evans Farm” and reserved by deed in 1920.
- Water flowage rights were conveyed to the Bellows Falls Canal Co. by deed in 1928.
- This parcel is subject to a permit requirement for development concerning potable and wastewater systems. Building a structure with wastewater and potable water conveniences will require a state permit. This is a standard permit notice that is now recorded by the Department of Environmental Conservation for all subdivisions that create undeveloped parcels.

Sensitive Features:

- Potential eagle nesting sites on the parcel.
- A 1,100 foot-shoreline and riparian area along the Connecticut River which acts in conjunction with other conserved lands along the Connecticut River as a wildlife travel corridor.
- Three plant species of conservation concern are found on the property (Table 2).
- One uncommon and one rare natural community on the property (Table 2).
- Prime agricultural soils.

V. Interim Management

There are certain activities that FWD will carry out during the interim period between the property acquisition and formal adoption of a LRMP. These interim stewardship activities are designed to protect the new property until the long-range management planning efforts are completed. A complete list of allowed activities is provided below.

Activities that will not occur until after a LRMP has been adopted are also included below. Activities are restricted on lands with ISPs as a matter of ANR policy and in keeping with conservation easements.

Activities allowed during interim period:

- Re-vegetating pre-existing log landings, riverbanks, and other disturbed areas including tree planting.
- Carrying out erosion control work on pre-existing roads, trails, and riverbanks.
- Erecting and maintaining appropriate signage and/or informational kiosk.

- Erecting and maintaining necessary gates.
- Planting and maintaining vegetated riparian buffer strips.
- Appropriately responding to trespass and encroachment situations.
- Surveying, boundary maintenance, and marking.
- Maintaining necessary pre-existing roads and trails and using them for stewardship access.
- Conducting forest inventory and other information gathering tasks necessary to prepare the long range management plan.
- Improving and maintaining parking area.
- Construct, repair, maintain, or replace an eagle nesting platform.
- Construct, repair, maintain, or replace fencing for protection of forest regeneration.
- Use by the public for existing dispersed pedestrian recreational purposes (e.g. bird watching, cross-country skiing, fishing, hunting, snowshoeing, trapping, and walking).
- Field maintenance such as mowing and brush control.
- Entering into cooperative agreements or leases with interested stakeholders to improve wildlife habitat, property maintenance or educational programs as needed.
- Control of noxious plants and weeds.


Activities that will NOT occur during the interim period:

- Ground disturbing activities not related to the above.
- Commercial vegetative management including timber harvesting.
- Construction of new roads and recreation trails.
- Establishment of new land uses.
- Recreational development (new trails or other infrastructure except for improving parking areas).
- Erecting new structures (tent platforms, permanent restroom facilities, kiosks, etc.)

- Granting of new rights-of-way for driveways, utility lines, etc.
- Recreational use of All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs).
- Collection of admission fees for non-commercial, public use of the property.
- Overnight camping and campfires.

Missing Link WMA
Updated Interim Stewardship Plan
August 1, 2012

Approved by: _____



Patrick Berry, Commissioner
VT Fish & Wildlife Department

Date: 12/4/12

Table 1. Forest Stand Information, Missing Link Wildlife Management Area.

Comp./ Stand	Acres	MSD	BA A Total/ Dom- codom.	Acc. BA/ A	Unacc. BA/A	Trees/ Acre	Site	Timber Type	Species BA	Regenera- tion Understory Condition	Descrip- -tion	Volume /Acre
1	69	11	96	67	29	146	2	Mixed	W. Pine 34 Red Oak 20 Hemlock 15	Dense black birch, hemlock, red oak, white pine	Two aged mixed	5.3 MBF 10.5 cords
2	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	Red Oak	—	—	Steep, no data	—
3	29	14.8	161	22	139	135	2	Oak/ Pine	W. Pine 49 Red Maple 20 Quaking Aspen 15	Mixed native and nonnative. Heavily browsed.	Low grade variable BA, even aged	1 MBF 23 cords
4	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	Early Succes- sional	—	—	Native and invasive shrubs	—
5	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	Open meadow	—	—	Mowed annually	—

Table 2. Uncommon, rare, threatened, or endangered species and communities found or potentially located on Missing Link Wildlife Management Area.

Missing Link WMA

Community/Species	State Rank	Location
Erosional River Bluff	Rare	Hadley Parcel
Rough Avens (<i>Geum lacinatum</i>)	Rare – S2	Location not for public distribution
Roundhead Bush Clover (<i>Lespedeza capitata</i>)	Uncommon	Location not for public distribution
Smiths Bulrush (<i>Schoenoplectus smithii</i>)	Very Rare – S1	Location not for public distribution
White Pine-Red Oak-Black Oak Forest	Uncommon (a low quality example)	Original parcel

Nearby Historical Record

Community/Species	State Rank	Location
Bald Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	Rare	Location not for public distribution
Dwarf Wedge Mussel (<i>Alasmidonta heterodon</i>)	Endangered	Location not for public distribution
Puritan Tiger Beetle (<i>Cicindela puritana</i>)	Threatened	Location not for public distribution

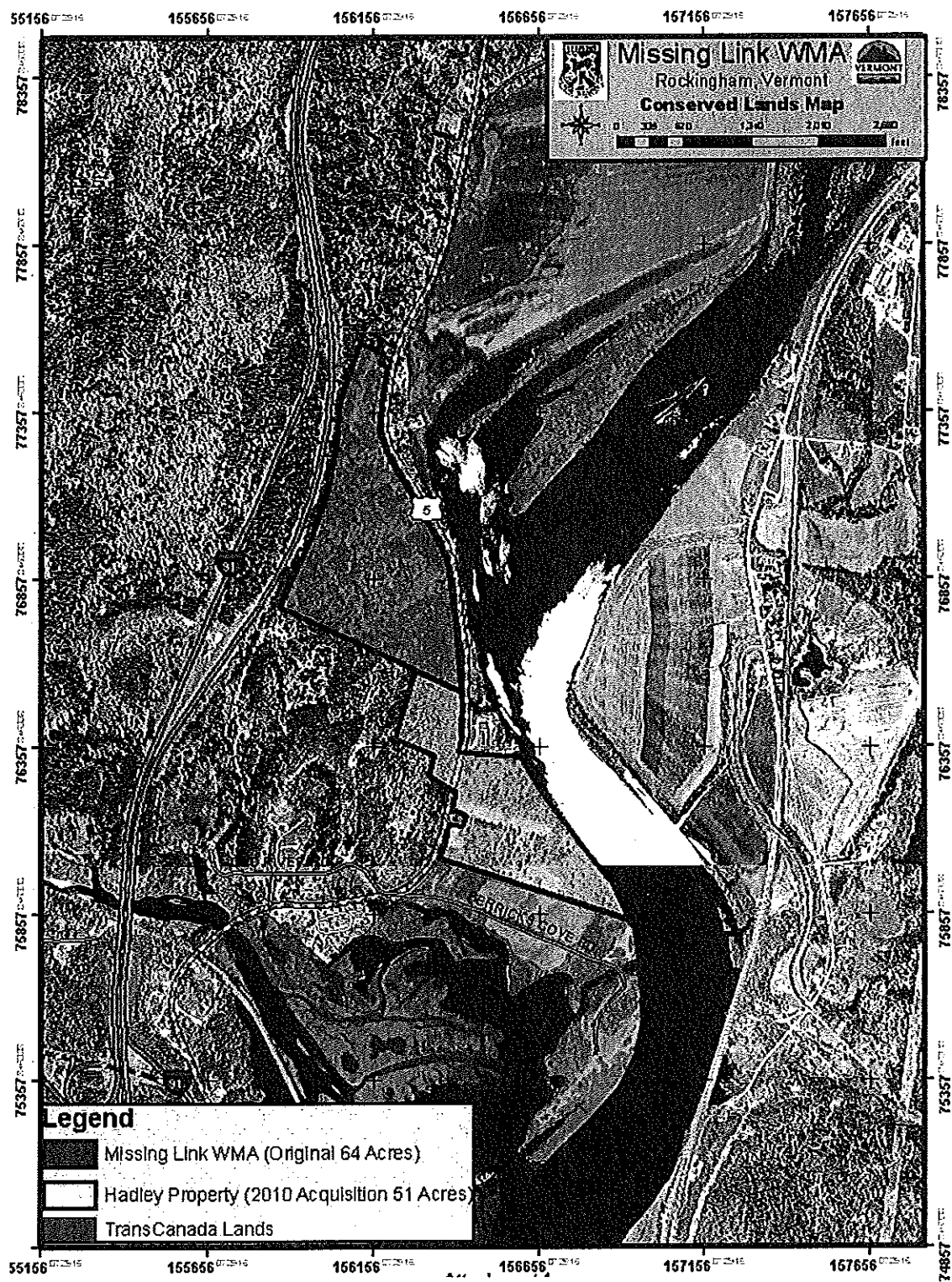


Figure 1. Conserved Lands Map, Missing Link Wildlife Management Area.

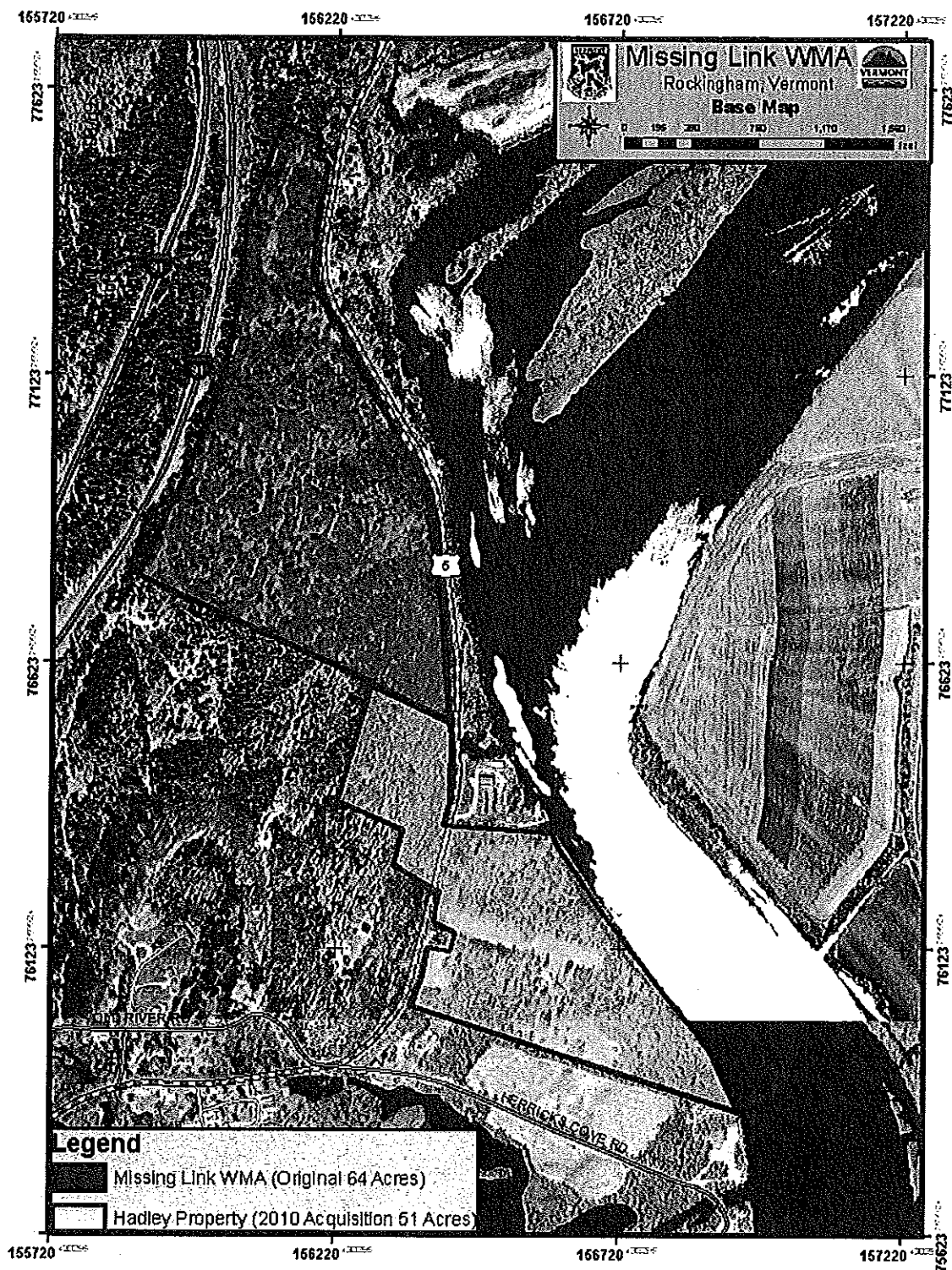


Figure 2. Conserved Lands Map, Missing Link Wildlife Management Area.

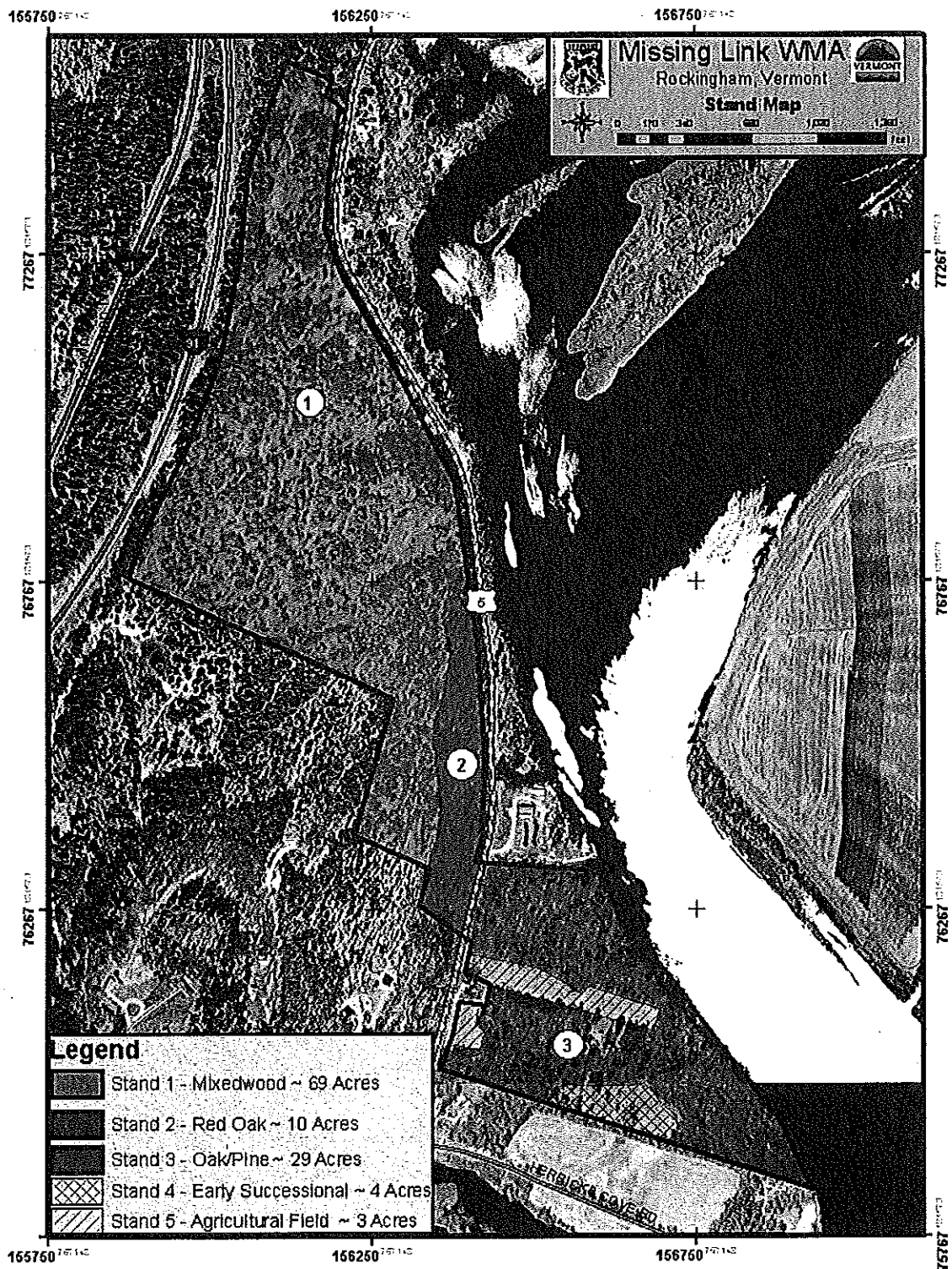


Figure 3. Stands Map, Missing Link Wildlife Management Area.